

2019 Virginia General Assembly | Crossover Report

Tuesday, February 5, 2019, was “Crossover Day” in the General Assembly—the last day for bills to be heard in the Senate or House of Delegates before crossing over to the other chamber for review. Below is an overview of some of the bills we support, oppose, or monitor.

Take Action

We need your help to protect consumers from surprise balance bills. The Balance Billing Protection legislation prevents consumers from receiving surprise balance bills in an emergency setting when one or more healthcare providers don’t take their insurance even if the hospital is in-network. This is a dispute between insurance companies and providers and shouldn’t put consumers in the middle. Contact members of [the House Commerce and Labor committee](#) and [your own legislator](#) to let them know you support this important protection for healthcare consumers. Please note that the bill is not on the docket yet—stay tuned to VPLC’s Facebook, Twitter, and email to know when your calls are needed!

It’s an uphill battle to get Senator Locke’s bill repealing the ban on TANF and SNAP for drug felons passed in the House of Delegates, and we need your help to make it happen. Please call your [Delegate](#) as well as members of the [House Appropriations Health and Human Services subcommittee](#) to remind them that this bill is important to the welfare of low-income Virginians—and that it is not a partisan issue. [Look here](#) for talking points and more information.

Bills We Support That Passed

Family & Child Welfare Law | *Center for Family Advocacy*

Foster Care Reform Advances

Recent reports on the state of foster care in Virginia galvanized members of the General Assembly on both sides of the aisle to act on foster care reform this year. Notable bills include:

- [Protecting the credit of foster children](#), who are especially vulnerable to identity theft—10% of foster children have damaged credit.
- **Limiting use of “congregate care” (group homes, treatment centers) for foster children** and increasing standards for these facilities.
- **A foster care “omnibus” bill** that adds state oversight with additional staffers to carry out that oversight and support.
- **Expanding free college tuition opportunities for foster youth**, which adds four-year public colleges to those offering free tuition to foster youth—currently, only community colleges offer this.

Elder Law | *Center for Family Advocacy*

Protecting Elders from Financial Exploitation

These bills (HB 1987 from Delegate Toscano and SB 1490 from Senators Obenshain and McPike) allow financial institutions to refuse or delay a transaction or disbursement of funds when there is suspicion of financial exploitation. This bill was in response to concern from law enforcement and prosecutors who found that often in financial exploitation cases, the money was gone and unrecoverable. This legislation will allow victims of exploitation to keep their money out of defendants’ hands while the alleged financial exploitation is investigated.

Domestic & Sexual Violence Law | *Center for Family Advocacy*

Making the Connection Between Cruelty to Animals and Intimate Partner Violence

The Senate version of this legislation raises the penalty for cruelty to animals from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony.

Public Benefits | *Center for Healthy Communities*

Removing Barriers to SNAP and TANF for Drug Felons

We were pleased to see forward movement on removing barriers to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for drug felons from the Senate to the House of Delegates. There's also money in the budget for TANF that we're fighting to hold onto this week. Notable bills include:

- **Repealing the drug felon ban in full for SNAP and TANF**, a Senate bill going to the House of Delegates.
- **Allowing TANF VIEW participants access to child care** for one year as they transition out if they are enrolled in a higher education program.
- **Granting access to TANF for children up to 19 years old who are in high school**, raising the maximum age from 18 years old.
- Having schools supplement their paper applications for free or reduced-priced meals with an online portal.

Consumer Law | *Center for Economic Justice*

Protecting Borrowers from Predatory Student Loan Servicers

These bills require servicers to obtain licenses and properly apply payments to loan balances, give borrowers accurate information, and report accurate information to credit bureaus.

Protecting Utility Customer Data as New Technologies Roll Out from the Grid Security Act of 2018

The original bill requires utility companies to disclose information they collect from their customers using advanced metering infrastructure, making clear that customers control what happens to their data. Big opposition from Dominion has resulted in the bill creating a stakeholder process to protect customer data while making the data usable to reduce energy bills.

Driver's Licenses Suspensions Due to Fines and Fees—Not Driving-related offenses

This bill may get some amendments on the House of Delegates side but stands to help 600,000 Virginians who lose their driver's license due to their inability to pay court fines and fees.

Housing Law | *Center for Economic Justice*

Eviction Prevention

A suite of bills from the Housing Commission intended to reduce Virginia's high eviction rates is picking up steam to pass through both chambers. There also remains some money in the budget for an Eviction Prevention position at The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Healthy Housing: Holding Slumlords Accountable

The Healthy Housing bill allows tenants to hold slumlords accountable by giving them the means to bring suits, particularly to enforce safety and habitability standards.



VPLC

Virginia Poverty
Law Center

Bills We Support That Died

- **House bill repealing the drug felon ban on SNAP for those convicted of distribution.**
- **House bill repealing the drug felon ban on TANF for those convicted of a first-time possession.**
- **Anti-lunch shaming measures** to either prevent meals from being thrown away or to include language in meal policies about meals being thrown away.
- **[Protecting domestic and sexual violence survivors who report abuse](#)** from strategic lawsuits against public participation—or SLAPP suits—filed by abusers to intimidate or deter victims from seeking help or court protection. Those opposed to the bill expressed concern around infringing on “free speech.” We plan to return this bill next year.
- **[Once again, legislation to prevent internet lenders from exploiting Virginians](#)**. People seeking loans online are subject to illegal lenders charging 300 to 700% interest that have none of the restrictions of payday and car title lending. We thank Senator Surovell, Senator Saslaw, and Delegate Yancey for introducing these bills to put some restrictions in place like those placed upon other lenders.
- **[Restricting use of forced arbitration clauses](#)**, which force consumers into secretive arbitration proceedings and deny their day in court, in student enrollment contracts and employment contracts. We will continue to work with legislators like Delegate Rodman to bring this important legislation back next year.